

Using Enrollee Experiences to Improve Medicaid Plans

Tips on how to share and listen to personal experiences
of members with the goal of improving services

Compiled By



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Kate B. Reynolds
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Investing in Impact



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The following training resource is meant to assist in the building and maintaining of strong and effective Member Advisory Committees, as required in the laws governing Medicaid Managed Care. The training resources are for the Managed Care Organizations (Plans) as well as Medicaid beneficiaries and other stakeholders (Members) and consist of the topics listed below in the Table of Contents.

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Using Enrollee Experiences to Improve Medicaid Plans

Member Advisory Committees: Why They Matter

In July of 2021, NC Medicaid switched to a managed care system, which put private companies in charge of administering healthcare for most North Carolinians enrolled in Medicaid. To ensure that these people would be able to give feedback to these companies directly, the law required the creation of Member Advisory Committees (MACs), which must include Medicaid enrollees. **These members are important voices for their communities, communicating about issues they may be having and offering input for improvements. Just as important - participating in a MAC gives them access to updates and other relevant information from the Managed Care Companies.**

Serving on a MAC offers the community member an opportunity to talk about the experiences of real people who are navigating the managed care health system. It is important to create a shared community agreement, ([see Designing Meetings that Encourage Feedback section on page 6](#)) before each meeting to make sure all members feel welcome, respected and heard.

The first part of the training is focused on offering members helpful tips for sharing their experiences. The second part is for Managed Care Plan staff and provides a framework for effective listening and designing meetings that encourage feedback.

For Members (Enrollees and other Stakeholders)

Reflect on your experience with the Plan

- What issues or challenges have you encountered in receiving care?
- Do you know whether these are widespread issues?
- What would make care more accessible for you and others in your community?
- What has been helpful to you in getting care?
- How could your experience with the Plan be improved?

After you've taken time to think about your experience, consider which details are most important to share with the Plan. Sharing your individual experience will help keep policy discussions focused on people. Use the tips below as you prepare to share.

View video
on Sharing Your
Experience

[ncjustice.org/
mac-training](https://ncjustice.org/mac-training)

Helpful Tips for Sharing Your Experience

ADVOCACY TIP

Use notes to capture your points

Organizing your thoughts in advance can help you communicate more clearly.

- List out the most important points you want Plan staff to know.
- Prioritize those points in case you have limited time to share.
- Reach out to Plan staff via secured email or call if you need to follow up on other points you were unable to raise in the meeting.

Tell Plan staff about yourself

Think about which details are most important for the point you want to make. Are you a patient, parent, or caregiver? Are there parts of your personal identity that are relevant to the experience you are sharing?

Be clear about a challenge or problem you experienced

If you have experienced several problems, try to focus on just one at a time. Focusing on a single challenge will help listeners understand. If you have additional issues to discuss, ask for more time after others have shared.

Ask for a specific solution (if you have a suggestion)

Explain how the issue you experienced could have been improved or avoided. This could be developing a new policy or changing a current policy. If you don't have a suggestion, then you can request that the Plan assign a staff member or create a team who can review these issues and concerns and offer recommendations for policy solutions.

Connect your experience with others

While you are the only person with your specific circumstances, you are likely not the only person experiencing this issue. How might others in your community be experiencing similar problems? If you can, share how a solution would not only improve care for yourself but will create better outcomes for many.

Stay focused

Prepare to speak for one to two minutes. Healthcare is very complex, consisting of many different and connected parts. Choose the most important details to share. When sharing your experience, stay aware of how you're feeling and how others are responding.

Helpful Tips for Sharing Your Experience - Continued

Choosing what to share

The details that matter most to each of us, personally, might not be the same ones that will move the Plan to action. One question you might ask yourself in deciding what to share is, “Will this info help the person I’m talking to understand what I want them to do?” or, “Would I be uncomfortable if I found out this information was shared with others trying to solve the problem I’m concerned about?”

Here is a good example of what kind of details to share: “Having to wait two months for a decision on whether my husband’s MRI would be covered meant that we didn’t have all the relevant information about his condition and were delayed starting treatment. So instead of starting radiation in June, he started in August and spent most of the summer worried that his condition would worsen before we got the MRI.”

ADVOCACY TIP

It’s okay not to know

If someone asks you a question that you are unsure about or can’t remember, it is ok to say you don’t know or that you will find information and follow up. You do not need to answer any questions you do not want to answer.



For Plans (Plan Staff)

Meetings should be designed to understand the perspectives of MAC Members as experts of their own experience and what choices and changes will be effective at improving the way they receive care.

Designing Meetings that Encourage Feedback

To get useful feedback that accurately reflects the experiences of members, these meetings must be welcoming spaces where everyone attending knows that they are seen as equal contributors. Each meeting should start by establishing a community agreement that creates a welcoming atmosphere and includes a discussion about consent.

A community agreement might include:

- Practice active listening and stay engaged
- Ensure all voices are heard
- Do not interrupt while others are speaking
- Honor confidentiality
- Ask and welcome questions for clarification
- Honor time limits

Questions for Members to think about as agreements are being developed:

- If I share my experience or story about managed care how will it be used? Who else will hear about it? Will my name be associated with it? Can I ask that certain details not be shared? Can I request anonymity in the written notes so that my identity is not shared?
- When will I have the opportunity to share my personal experience? Is there a sign-up process?

Important considerations for Plans as agreements are being developed:

- If members share their experiences or stories, how will they be utilized? These stories should be used to improve services for members, not for the promotion of the Plans.
- Will these meetings be recorded, or will there only be written notes? If it is only written notes, then it is important to ensure that the story is captured accurately. What are the best ways to do that?

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Listening with Purpose

The stories others share about their experiences, thoughts, and ideas deserve the kind of thoughtful consideration that can only be achieved with active and intentional listening. Below are some helpful practices to support thoughtful listening.

1 Preparing to listen by clearing your mind

So much of our days are spent listening to others, often only in order to respond. However, effective listening requires you to put aside your personal intentions, goals, and the outcomes you want—so that you can stay present and actually hear what the other person is saying. While there are tools that can help you stay attentive in the moment, you will be able to receive more information if you are able to clear your mind before the conversation even begins.

As you prepare to enter the meeting take a few minutes to check in with yourself. Are there burning questions you want to be answered? Do you have a specific item you want to share? Do you absolutely need to make sure the group discusses a topic? Write down your thoughts in advance so they aren't taking up headspace as other folks begin to share.

Right before the meeting begins, take another moment and check back in with yourself to see if there is anything else you want to take note of so you can have peace of mind that you have everything you want to bring up without having to try to actively remember while others are talking.

2 Let the Speaker Speak

Whoever is speaking should have the right to speak and be heard without interruption. While you are listening to what is being said, take notes about what you are hearing, jot down follow-up questions as they come up, and note anything you aren't sure you understand. This helps you pay attention to what's being said and can help you process in real-time.

It's often helpful to use body language such as nodding, eye contact, and other nonverbal expressions to show that you are engaged and listening to what's being said. It's important to note that individuals and cultures have many different ways of communicating verbally and non-verbally and these should be explored and acknowledged by the group prior to any content being shared.

3 Facts - Feelings - Values

After the storyteller is finished, use that time to describe what you just heard (another reason notes are super helpful!) through facts, feelings, and values.

Facts: Take note of the content of what was said including details, thoughts, concerns, explanations, and descriptions shared by the storyteller.

Feelings: Reflect back to the feelings you heard during the story using your own words to express the feelings stated or strongly implied by the other.

Values: Keep in mind that the discussed issue is touching on something the person values or believes strongly. Explicitly name values as you are reflecting back to the storyteller.

PRACTICE #1

See how the story below can be separated into Facts, Feelings, and Values

Storyteller: *I am retired and I go to the community pool every day. I live alone, so I like the chance to talk with people at the pool. My doctor recommends that I use the pool as much as possible. I have to walk with a cane. Sometimes my hip hurts so much from osteoarthritis that I fall. I hardly go out in the winter because I am afraid of falling.*

Listener:

- **Facts:** The doctor advises you to swim as much as possible. You need to swim in order to walk.
- **Feelings:** You are anxious about your aging and hip issues. You are afraid of falling.
- **Values:** You prioritize your health and will do what the doctor asks.

PRACTICE #2

See how the story below can be separated into Facts, Feelings, and Values

Storyteller: *Having to wait two months for a decision on whether my husband's MRI would be covered meant that we didn't have all the relevant information about his condition and were delayed starting treatment. So instead of starting radiation in June, he started in August and spent most of the summer worried that his condition would worsen before we got the MRI.*

Listener:

- **Facts:** You waited two months for insurance approval. This delayed your husband's treatment.
- **Feelings:** You are worried delayed care will lead to worsened health outcomes for your husband.
- **Values:** You are committed supporter and advocate of your husband's health.

Listening with Purpose - Continued

4 Give Space

Allow that storyteller to clarify or correct any misunderstood facts, feelings or values. It's important to clarify instead of assuming and to ask questions instead of judging. This is the part of active listening that we can take deeper than simply parroting back words. We're not just trying to show the other person that we heard their words. We need to confirm our understanding to really hear what they're saying and what message they want to get across.

Offer time in the meeting, as well as other ways to communicate or clarify their story through email, text, calls, etc. based on the storytellers' needs and/or preferences.

5 Be Generous

Generous listening means that as you listen you understand the story the other person is telling has no bad intentions; even if the details may be uncomfortable. Pause and recognize your own feelings before responding and try to see things from their point of view, even if you don't agree.

Respect is important in both listening and storytelling. People sometimes take a while to get to their point. They need to feel safe before they can get to what they really want to say. Don't worry about having an immediate response ready, the moment they take a breath. Having an immediate response ready the moment they stop talking is just another form of interrupting. Take a breath before you reply.

